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Ex-Sandinista Warns Against U.S. Intervention in Nicaragua

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Nicaraguan rebel leader Eden Pastora, visiting Washington to gather support for his drive against the Sandinista rulers in Managua, warned yesterday that U.S. intervention in his country would hurt both Nicaragua and the United States.

Pastora, a former revolutionary leader who later split with the Sandinistas and now leads a guerrilla force he estimates at 4,000-strong, said U.S. military action against the government in Managua would not help his cause.

"We are anti-interventionist by principle," he said at a breakfast with reporters and editors of The Washington Post. "We were against intervention in Afghanistan, in Vietnam and in Grenada by both the Cubans and the North Americans. We are fighting against Cuban intervention in Nicaragua. The problems of Nicaragua must be solved by Nicaraguans and all we can ask you is, 'Please don't get involved in Nicaragua.'"

Pastora's guerrilla group, the Sandino Revolutionary Front, is based in the southern part of Nicaragua near the border with Costa Rica. It has refrained from uniting with a larger, U.S.-backed guerrilla force that is fighting in the north from bases in Honduras.

Pastora reiterated his charges that the larger group, called the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, is led by former supporters of dictator Anastasio Somoza.

He said his group could not unite with the larger one until it agreed to purge the former officers of Somoza's National Guard and to support what he called his "democratic plan for national unity," which he said is "concerned with social change and the revolutionary process."

Pastora said the Costa Rica-based coalition his group is affiliated with—the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance—hoped to win the support of "the balanced and thinking sectors of the Sandinista Front" inside Nicaragua. He said a representative of the alliance met with Cuban President Fidel Castro in June in an apparent mediation effort. The Sandinista leadership in Managua objected to the effort and it apparently went no further, he added.

A Cuban source in Washington said the representative of Pastora's group met only with a Central Committee official in Havana. He said Cuba transmitted the alliance's position to Managua, but it was rejected by the Sandinistas and the matter stopped there.

Pastora said a later effort to contact "moderate" Sandinistas "was cut off by the most radical" leaders in Managua.

Pastora emphasized that he was still looking for a way to negotiate with the Sandinistas, but added that military "muscle" was necessary to make them listen.

Pastora said the purpose of his trip to the United States was to win "bipartisan" support for his movement. He has met with members of Congress and on Monday spoke with Langhorne A. Motley, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

Declining to disclose the substance of his discussion with Motley, Pastora indicated only that he had set out his group's goals and its conditions for uniting with the CIA-financed and directed Nicaraguan Democratic Force. Told that administration officials have said his group also receives direct and indirect aid from Washington, Pastora said: "Directly—no; indirectly, I don't know. I can't control that."